



## Border management: European Border and Coast Guard Agency strengthens operational cooperation with Albania

Tirana, 12 February 2018

**Today, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos and Fatmir Xhafaj, Minister of Interior of the Republic of Albania, initialled the draft status agreement for operational cooperation between the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and Albania.**

Once in force, the agreement will allow the Agency to provide assistance in the field of external border management and will enable European Border and Coast Guard Agency teams to be swiftly deployed on Albanian territory in case of a sudden shift in migratory flows.

Commissioner **Avramopoulos** said: *"I would like to thank the Albanian authorities for the fruitful negotiations and their commitment to reaching an agreement so quickly. Albania is a frontrunner in the region, and the agreement will serve as a role model for similar arrangements we are negotiating with other partners in the Western Balkans. Closer cooperation between Albania and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency will allow us to be quicker and more flexible in the way we respond to any potential migratory challenges. It is an important step forward and is in the best interests of both Albania and the European Union."*

Minister of Interior **Xhafaj** said: *"This is an important agreement which will help us receive qualified assistance with regard to border management. It will also allow Albania to benefit from the projects the European Union will deliver during the implementation of this agreement. This is a good opportunity for us to expand cross-border cooperation, and cooperation with EU countries. I also take this opportunity to thank the Albanian negotiating team for their professionalism in negotiating and concluding this agreement. We will immediately pursue the required procedures to start the implementation of the agreement."*

Announced by President Juncker in his 2017 State of the Union address and [adopted](#) by the Commission last week, the strategy for 'A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans' highlighted the significant progress made by Albania on its European path and the European future of the region. Today's draft agreement is the first negotiation to be concluded between the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the EU's partners in the Western Balkans.

Strengthened operational cooperation between priority third countries and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency will contribute to better management of irregular migration, further enhance security at the EU's external borders and strengthen the Agency's ability to act in the EU's immediate neighbourhood. The status agreement with Albania is yet another step towards the full operationalisation of the Agency.

The Commission is currently negotiating similar agreements with Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and hopes for a swift conclusion to both sets of negotiations. The agreement with Albania must now be endorsed by Member States and will be formally signed at a later date, once both sides complete the necessary legal procedures. Once the Agreement has entered into force, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency will be able to carry out operational activities and deploy teams in the regions of Albania that border the EU, in agreement with both the Albanian authorities and the authorities of those EU Member States bordering the area of operations.

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Press contacts:

[Natasha BERTAUD](#) (+32 2 296 74 56)

[Tove ERNST](#) (+32 2 298 67 64)

[Kasia KOLANKO](#) (+ 32 2 296 34 44)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)